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**August 14, 2013**

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## **Alaska National Guardsmen rescue hypothermic rafter near Delta Junction**

**CAMP DENALI, Alaska**—Airmen with the Alaska National Guard's 210<sup>th</sup>, 211<sup>th</sup> and 212<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadrons rescued a man who was dragged down river after his raft overturned while floating on the Gerstle River, about 25 nautical miles southeast of Delta Junction, Aug. 13.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force Rescue Coordination Center was notified by the Alaska State Troopers around 6:30 p.m. after the victim's rafting partner hiked out from the location to Delta Junction.

"The victim's rafting partner started the hike from the location at 5 a.m. to alert authorities," said Senior Master Sgt. Robert Carte, superintendent, 11th Air Force RCC. "The individuals did not have a personal locator beacon or any other technology to call for help, so it took the friend more than 12 hours to hike out to the nearest community and find help."

The 210<sup>th</sup>, 211<sup>th</sup> and 212<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadrons were notified shortly after 7 p.m., and after accepting the mission, Guardian Angels with the 212<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron boarded a 210<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter at Eielson Air Force Base and were en route to the victim's location. The 211<sup>th</sup> HC-130 King aircraft reconfigured to take on more fuel, in case in-air refueling was needed for the mission, launched from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Within 45 minutes of launching, the HH-60 had to turn back to Eielson due to a mechanical issue.

"The Pave Hawk crew made it safely back to Eielson," Carte said. "And because of our extremely skilled helicopter maintenance team, the crew was able to quickly move to an alternate HH-60 and head back out to the area."

Once on scene at 8:45 p.m., Guardian Angels assessed the victim and provided medical support for the victim's severed finger, broken ribs and hypothermic condition.

"The victim's friend was able to place a cover over top and start a fire to warm him up as much as possible," Carte said. "But he was in need of immediate care when the rescue crews arrived."

Mission planning for this rescue had to look into the wildfire smoke from the Fairbanks area fires and the direction the wind was pushing it.

"Visibility was down to less than a mile," Carte said. "The crews had to be aware of any sort of wind direction change, since that would significantly change the logistics of this rescue."

The HC-130 King aircraft flew overhead the HH-60 Pave Hawk and provided immediate communication and weather updates during the rescue operation.

The victim was transported to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital at 10:30 p.m. and treated for serious but non-life threatening injuries.

The Alaska Air National Guard's 210<sup>th</sup>, 211<sup>th</sup> and 212<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadrons were awarded one save for this mission.

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